Chapter VIII
Using Blended Learning to Teach Foreign Brides Chinese

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ABSTRACT

This project aimed to construct a Blended Learning model with a lecture-review Web site, which would support students’ self-learning at home or in the community center of An-Chow village (Taiwan). The model would assist the participants (foreign brides from South-East Asia) not only in learning the Chinese culture but also in improving their relationships with the family members.

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are more than 240,000 foreign brides in Taiwan. It is estimated by the Ministry of Education that in the year 2010, approximately 30% of the first grade elementary school students would come from families in which either one of the parent is of foreign origin. Most of these immigrants would come from South-East Asian countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Accompanying immigration is an alteration of our society, which is anticipated to become more diverse and multi-cultural. Just like how most people feel when living or working in a completely unfamiliar environment, foreign brides often experience cultural shock and face with adaptation problems after immigrating to another county. This could present a challenge to both the residents and immigrants, especially for the people living in rural areas. Since most of the people who marry foreign brides have lower socio-economic status, the aids from the Government or Foundations become pivotal to improve the current situations of such families.
With the use Blended-Learning model, the immigrants would be able to understand and appreciate the Chinese culture and this would in turn help minimize the problems of cultural conflicts or misunderstandings. The Blended-Learning model of Cooperative and Situated Learning allowed the participants to learn the Chinese language and culture more effectively, and has shown to be helpful in providing a great liaison between foreign brides and local Taiwanese people.

Traditional Learning presents knowledge in an abstract form. In contrast, Situated Learning requires students to be involved in an environment in which the knowledge, context and culture that the instructor intends to teach is well integrated in a pre-designed situation (Lave, 1990) where social interaction is also key to the learning. In addition to Situated Learning, Brown et al. proposed the idea of Cognitive Apprenticeship, which is also an integral concept of our curriculum. Cognitive Apprenticeship enables students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity (Brown et al., 1990). These various aspects of innovative learning strategies have been reviewed and discussed by McLellan (McLellan, 1995). For Situated Learning, knowledge is presented in an appropriate context for students to absorb through social interactions and collaborations. The key components of Situated Cognition proposed by McLellan includes apprenticeship, collaboration, reflection, coaching, multiple practices, articulation of learning skills, realistic representations and technology (McLellan, 1995).

Recently, many researchers have been trying to apply Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to traditional education. Most researchers have agreed that Blended Learning is either equally or more effective and efficient than complete e-learning or complete traditional learning (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004; Hamburg, Cernian & Thij, 2003). Since this curriculum was designed based on the idea of Blended Learning, it is crucial that we understand which type of Blended Learning is appropriate within this context.

There are two types of Blended Learning—blended courses and blended lectures (Bielawski and Metcalf, 2003). Because the aim of this study was to teach characters and culture using Situated Learning and arts activities, we decided to apply blended lecture which was more suitable for our teaching purposes. Blended lectures are essentially a series of carefully prepared lectures with close connections and relations.

During the course of Blended Learning, e-learning will be used as a support system to allow students to access lecture notes or to take quizzes on-line (Rossett et al., 2003). In addition, we will adopt asynchronous learning methodology such as putting up discussion boards, to let learners experience both self and cooperative learning simultaneously (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2003; Swan, 2001).

To achieve the research aim, we developed a lecture-review website (‘Blended Learning Web Development’ subsection) to support students’ self-learning at home or in the community center. This chapter will discuss about how this project integrated situated arts activities and lecture-review website in Blended Learning (‘Instruction Plan and Course Design’ subsection).

After the curriculum ended, the research staffs sent questionnaires to students to evaluate the learning effects of Blended Learning activities. The self-developed questionnaire and the feedback from participants are described and collected in the ‘Experiment and Questionnaire’ subsection. The evaluation includes both quantitative and qualitative results (‘Discussion’ subsection).

**MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER**

**Instruction Plan and Course Design**

The learning is accomplished with due regard for reasonable expenditures of money and time (Jerrold, 1985). This is true to any family with foreign brides. Blended Learning is believed to provide
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